



NOTES FROM THE:

Air Force Accounting and Finance Office

by Colonel Martha M. Beatty

Greetings from Denver, Colorado! I am delighted to report that the Air Force Accounting and Finance Office is now six-months old and I have the opportunity to share with the Financial Management community our mission, goals, and progress to date. First, though, I want to congratulate not only our Air Force-level Financial Services award winners but also all those who won at the MAJCOM level. One of my first duties in this new job was to sit on the awards panel. The men and women in today's FSOs are smart, innovative, and accomplished. It is for those people—40% of the comptroller career field—that our office was created.

Mission

Until the Air Force Accounting and Finance Office (AFAFO) stood up in October 1998, the Air Force had gone over seven years without a Secretariat-level office dedicated to Accounting and Finance operations. While we report directly to SAF/FM, our office is located at DFAS-DE to enhance communications between the Denver network and work operational FSO issues the MAJCOMs bring to our attention. Our mission is to provide oversight to FSOs throughout the world, provide procedural and operational guidance, fix common problems between FSOs and DFAS, and provide a strong quality assurance program for our financial managers.

Goals

My first meeting with Mr Hale set the tone for the AFAFO. He truly cares about our FSO people and challenged us to provide the support FSOs need to accomplish our collective goals of both paying our people and vendors as well as balancing our accounting books to ensure auditable financial records. He set the following first year goals:

Stand Up the AFAFO: As of mid-January we have all ten of our personnel on board. Our four military and six civilian employees come to us with a total of 210 years of Accounting and

Finance background in all areas of military pay, travel pay, civilian pay, disbursing, accounting, systems, quality assurance, and vendor pay.

Strengthen Internal Controls: Over the past year, both DFAS and the Services have been criticized for fraud and theft. Headlines such as Federal government embezzlers are finding out that crime pays are eroding public trust in our ability to be good stewards of funds entrusted to us. To help combat fraud we have published a draft Quality Assurance (QA) Operating Instruction (on the AFAFO web site for your use), established self-inspection checklists, developed Cross-feed of both problems and benchmark practices, and developed a QA Managers handbook. Our first-ever FSO and QA manager worldwide conference this month focuses on quality assurance.

Improve Regulations: It was astonishing to learn many FSO offices had no access to DFAS-DE regulations needed to accomplish day-to-day operations. Our first challenge to DFAS was to get the regulations out on the web and get them updated. This has proved quite a task, but I'm pleased with DFAS-DE's progress. These regulations can be found at <http://info-de.dfas.mil>. Our next challenge is to write additional AFIs and update the Bluebook.

Negotiate DFAS/FSO Issues: Our relationship with DFAS-DE is growing. We have developed a strong partnership, attending staff meetings, working day-to-day issues MAJCOMs bring to our attention and improving communication flow. As such we now have a positive Air Force voice in procedural changes which impact our FSOs. Being collocated with DFAS-DE allows us daily interaction to negotiate the best way of doing business to provide financial services to our customers.

As we grow from our infancy to maturity our overall goal is to work to improve the tools and processes used by our FSOs in the field. I look forward to working on your behalf with both DFAS and SAF/FM.